

VZCZCXRO1050  
RR RUEHAG RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLZ RUEHROV  
DE RUEHHE #0843 3241104  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 201104Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3920  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 1124  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0394  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0002  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0365  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0090

UNCLAS HELSINKI 000843

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [WHA](#) [EUN](#) [VE](#) [FI](#)  
SUBJECT: FINLAND: DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA

REF: A. STATE 154674

[1](#)B. STATE 157005

[1](#)1. (SBU) Polchief delivered reftel demarche Nov. 19 to Jukka Pietikainen, Director of the Finnish MFA's Unit for Latin America. Pietikainen said that the UK had initially circulated a draft statement to EU partners condemning the Chavez Regime's proposed constitutional reforms in strong terms and calling for greater respect for democracy, civil society, and personal freedoms. However, Spain, Italy and Portugal, among others, will not support such a harshly worded public statement, so the UK has now offered "more balanced" statement that Finland hopes will win support from those member states. Finland supported the initial statement, Pietikainen said, believing that the EU has achieved very little impact through "silent diplomacy" with the Chavez government, and that the time for more robust public diplomacy is at hand. However, he added, Finland will also support the new draft statement in the hopes of winning EU consensus.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On the bilateral level, Pietikainen -- who had just returned from Venezuela the day before -- said that Finland's small embassy in Caracas had been active in vocally supporting civil society and Venezuelan NGOs, but that other resident EU member state Embassies were not comfortable with public statements. He fully shared our concerns about limits on NGOs, the decline in free speech, and Chavez's increasing support to militias. However, because the Finns have limited bilateral access to the GOV, it still remains it their interest to work within the EU as well, Pietikainen added.  
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